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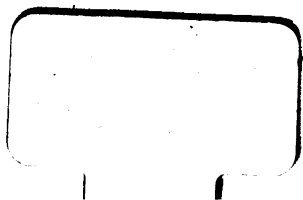
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ENGRAVING

5932
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vol.1



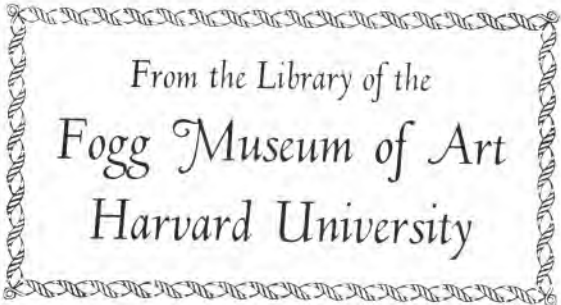
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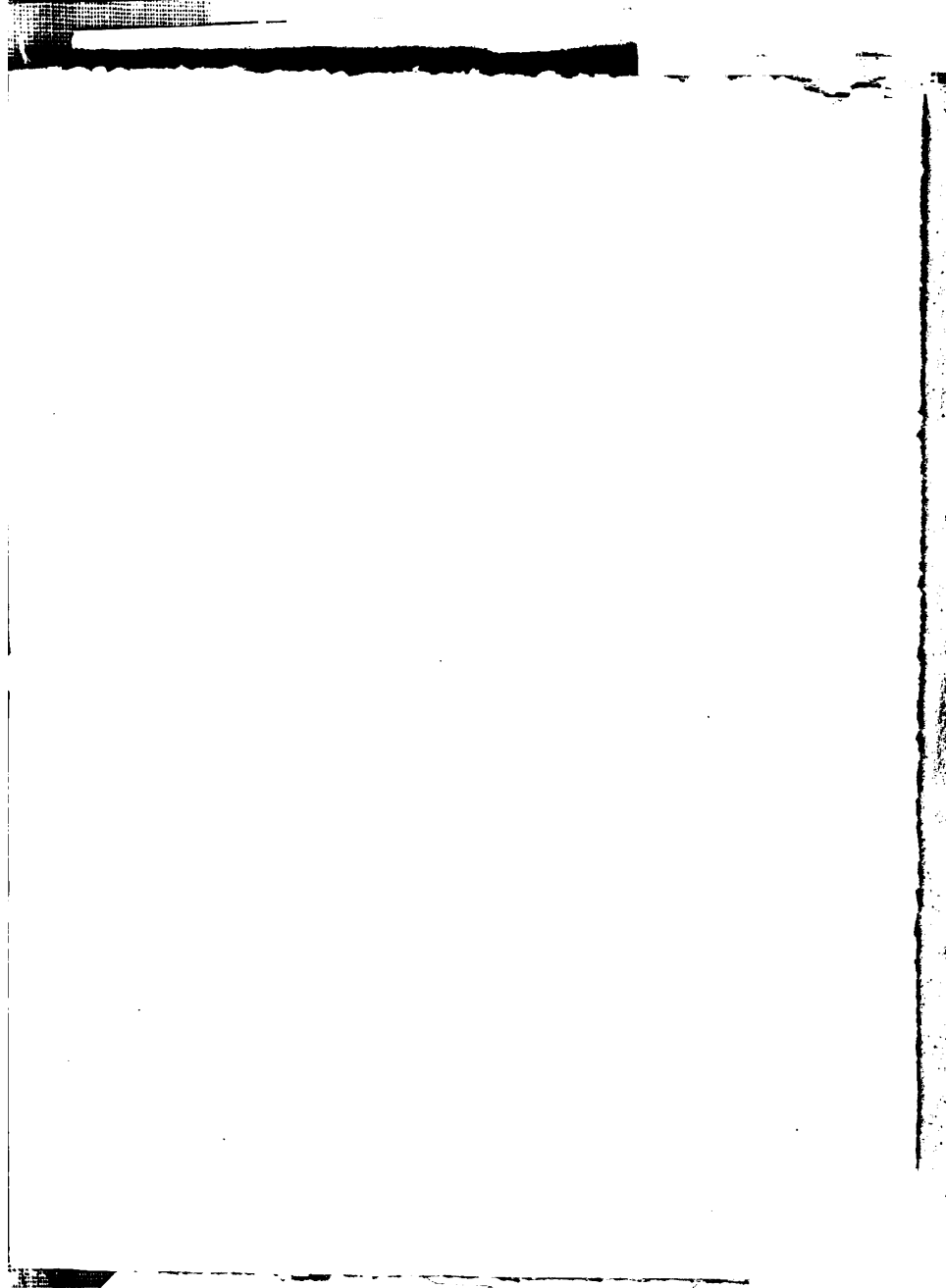


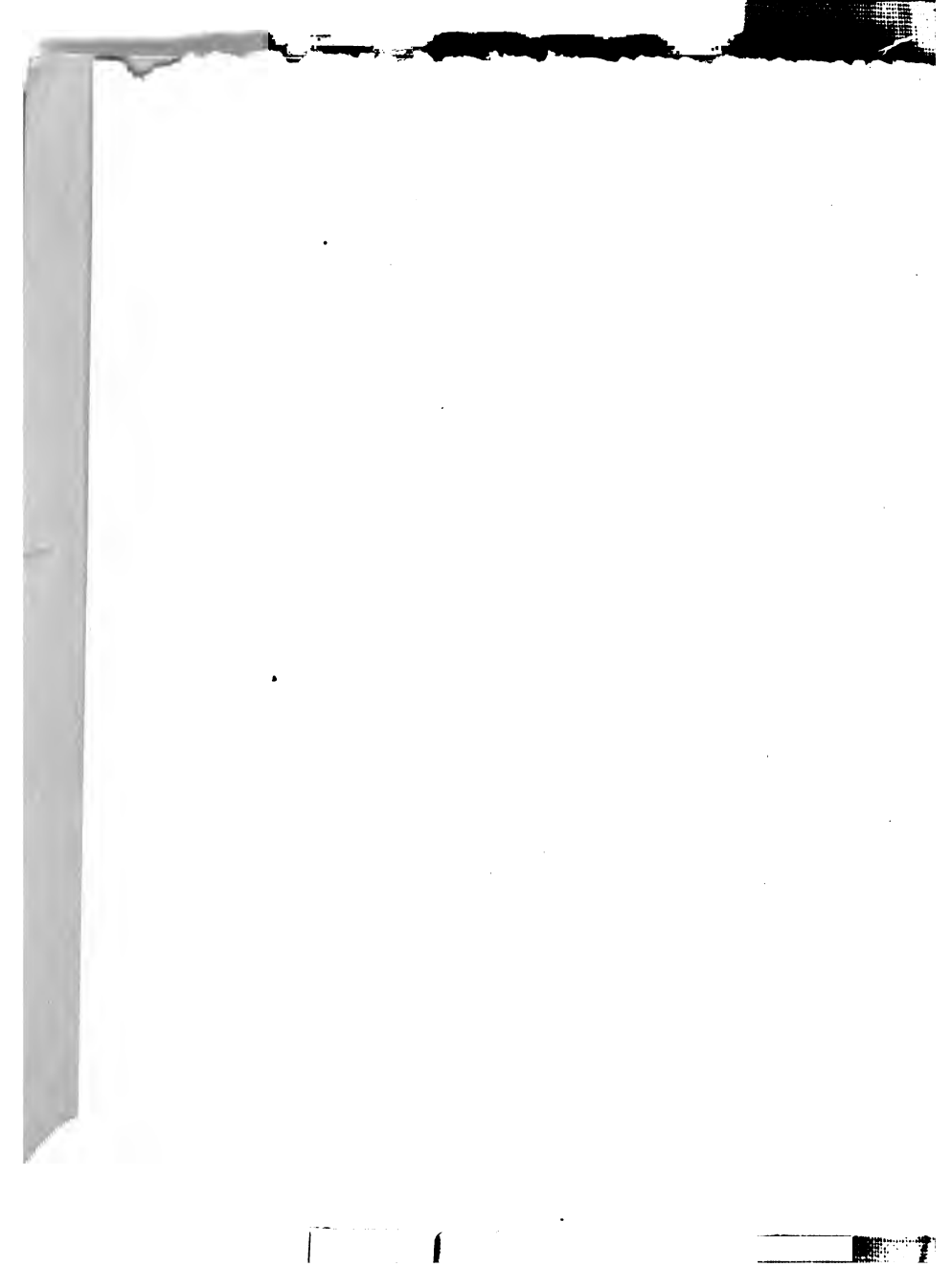
Some information, regarding
Eighteenth Century Mezzotints
Engravers and their work.

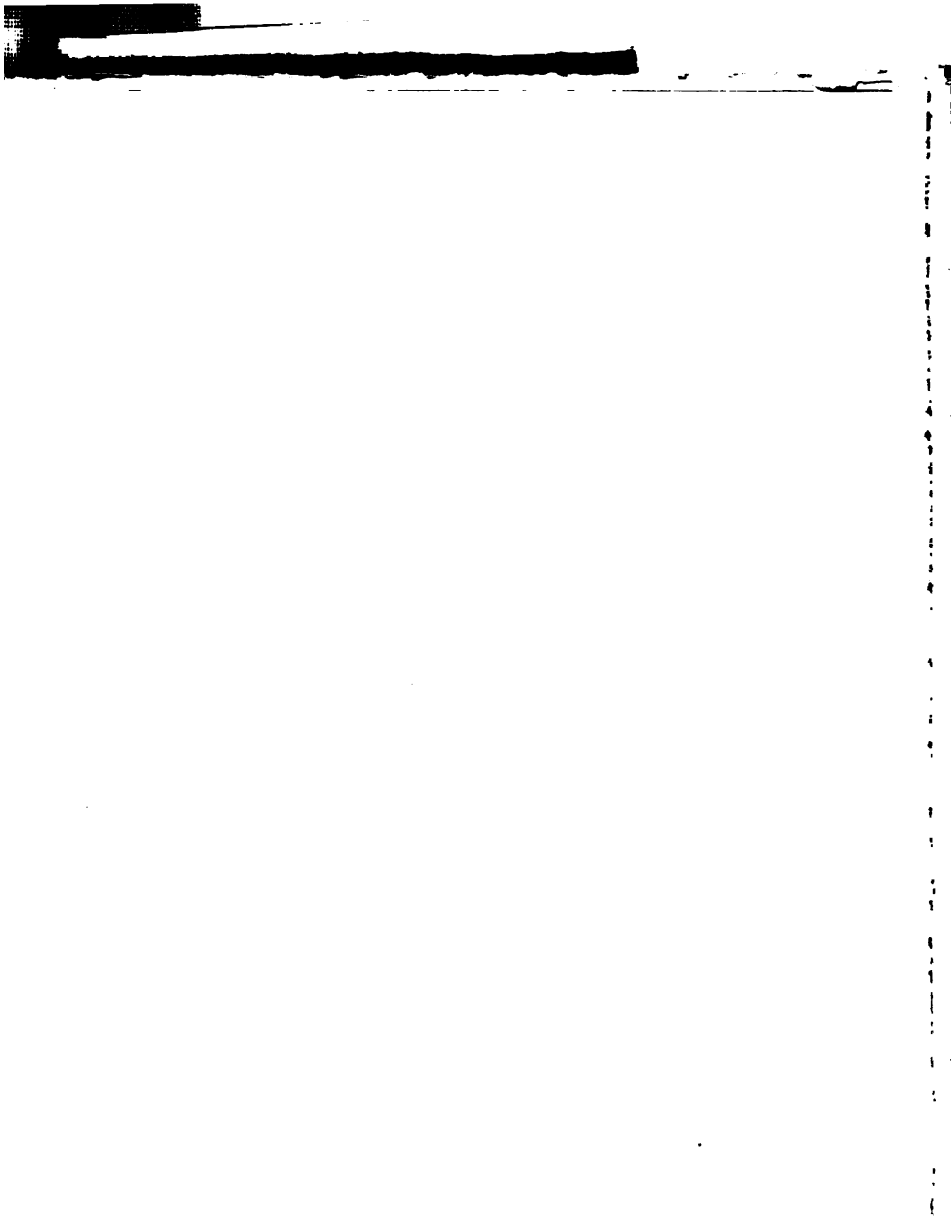
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Geo. Romney

Henry Meyer

Lady Hamilton
as Nature

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INTRODUCTION

This little pamphlet is intended for those who are interested in old Mezzotint Engravers and their works, but who have only a slight knowledge of them; it describes in a general way how the plates and prints are made, and gives such information as may prove useful to those who are making, or intending to make, a collection of prints in black and in color.

It is conceded that Ludwig Von Siegen, who resided at Amsterdam in 1642, discovered and completed in the month of August of that year, a portrait of Amelia Elizabeth, Dowager Landgravine of Hesse, in mezzotint, this being the first engraving of the kind known. In 1654 this engraver met Prince Rupert at Brussels, and to him confided his secret.

**History
and
General
Informa-
tion**

History,
etc.
(continued)

Prince Rupert afterwards disclosed it to Wallerant Vaillant and to Evelyn and Sherwin when he was in England. Theodore Caspara Fustenberg was also another artist who obtained the knowledge, for there is a work by him dated the same year as the first one by Prince Rupert (1656). The art then passed from one to another, there being engravings by men who flourished during the latter half of the 17th century, among them John Thomas, called Thomas of Ypres (his earliest mezzotint is dated 1658); John Fredrich Leonard, 1669; John Van Somer, 1668; J. Vander Brugen, 1681. In 1668 Prince Rupert went to England, and nine years afterwards, in the hands of William Sherwin, the development of the new mezzotinto engraving began in the country where it was destined to rise to its highest state. Sherwin's first print is dated 1669. There were a number of engravers at this period who were successful in producing good work, the most noted being Place, Gascar, Blootelling, Valck, and J. Smith. At the opening of

the 18th century J. Smith was the foremost artist in mezzotinto engraving. When this style of art had become concentrated in England, artists flocked there from other countries; from France, J. Simon, who was considered the rival of Smith; the elder Faber, from Holland. A little later other engravers changed their style from line to mezzotinto, such as young Faber, G. White and Pelham; the last artist came to America and introduced his art here. In the closing years of the first half of the 18th century mezzotinto engraving declined very much in England, and did not revive until about 1753-54, when new blood was instilled into the practice of the art by the work of artists of the Irish school, such as MacArdell, who engraved the earliest plate from a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1746, Houston, Purcell, and subsequently Dixon, Fisher, J. Watson, T. Watson, J. R. Smith, Dickinson, Valentine Green, Dean, and Walker. Most of these engravers became masters of the art, and as the great portrait painters of the English

History,

etc.

(continued)

History, school lived and flourished at the same
etc. time examples by the masters of this
(continued) period—Reynolds, Hoppner, Romney,
Gainsborough, Ramsay, Abbott, Beechey,
Copley, Opie, and Stewart—were copied
and engraved, often in the same year that
they were painted. These engravings
have not *naturally* deteriorated as time
has passed on. This cannot be said of
many of the originals, for ink and paper
are more enduring than canvas and paint.
It would seem as if the artist-engravers,
stimulated by the extraordinary power of
the painters of this period, had been en-
abled to surpass in their art for the pur-
pose of transcribing in all their entirety
the pictures they imitated. To quote a
remark made by Sir Joshua, after he had
seen a fine engraving by MacArdell after
one of his paintings: "By this man I shall
be immortalised." Other engravers at
this period worthy of notice were P.
Dawe, Dunkarton, Grozer, Hodges, Hud-
son, Jones, Judkins, Laurie, Duponte, the
nephew of Gainsborough; Haward and
Spilsbury. There were less-known paint-

ers, such as Wright of Derby and Van Huysum, after whose pictures Earlom and Pether engraved some remarkably brilliant and effective prints. It seems but natural to believe that in possessing and studying works by these masters of mezzotinto engraving we are enabled more thoroughly to live in the time of the painters and understand their works more perfectly, and at the same time to nourish and improve our taste. Although no living engraver can compete in excellence with the great mezzotint engravers of the latter part of the eighteenth century, England possessed, till 1887, one who was almost as great as any of those; namely, Samuel Cousins. Born in 1801, his transcripts of Lawrence and Landseer's paintings are works of the highest art. The following is a partial list of the prominent and less noted engravers, not mentioned above, who flourished at the end of the 18th, and beginning of the 19th, century: Barney, J. Ward, W. Ward, Young, G. Dawe, H. Meyer, C. Turner, G. Clint, S. W. Reynolds, H.

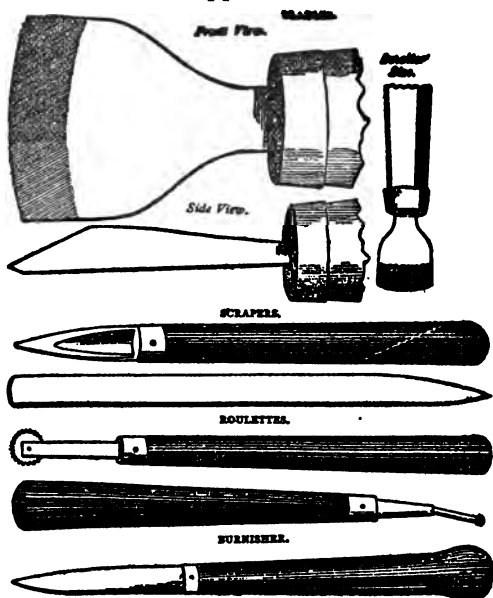
History,
etc.
(continued)

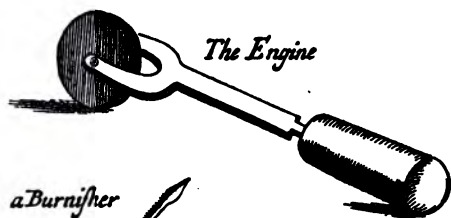
History, Dawe, W. Say, T. Lupton, and T. Hodg-
etts.
etc.
(continued) *(For much of the above information we are
indebted to the writings of John Chaloner
Smith and Dr. Edward Hamilton.)*

The instruments used in mezzotinto engraving consist of the cradle or rocking-tool, the scraper, the roulette and the burnisher.

The plates intended for engraving should be of the best copper.

Tools and Metal





The



Severall .



Scrapers

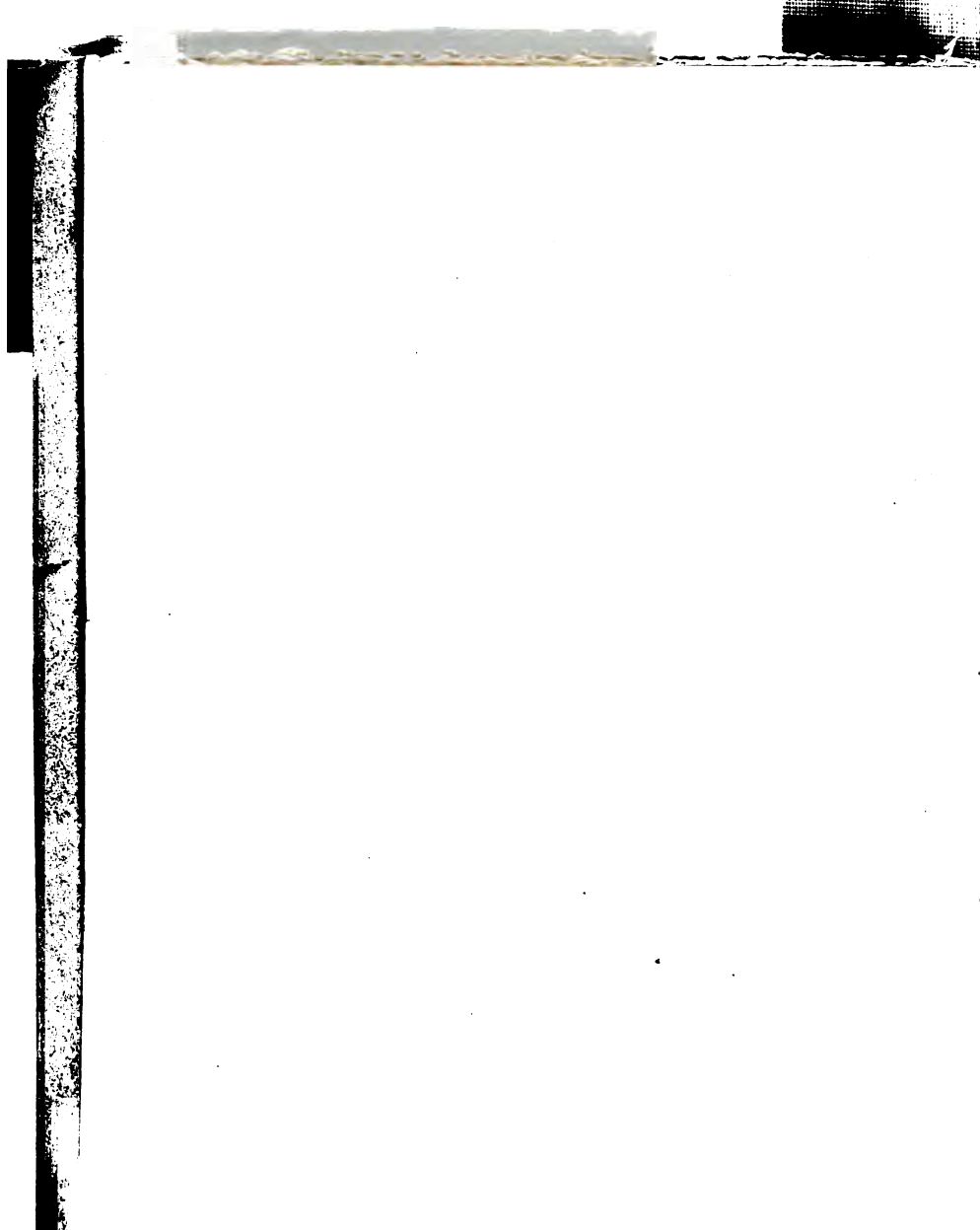




Sir Joshua Reynolds

J. R. Smith

Lady Catherine Pelham Clinton



Mezzotinto is executed by covering the surface of the plate, using the cradle or rocking-tool, with lines sunk in it so close to each other, in many different directions, that, if printed, it would give a black impression ground from the whole. When this work is completed, the subject is traced, and the work is commenced by scraping and then burnishing the highest lights, after which the secondary tones are scraped away, and so on, proceeding gradually from light to dark, and leaving for the deepest shades the ground untouched.

**Mezzotinto
Engraving**

A mezzotint plate is the reverse of an etched plate, for in the former the blacks are removed, and the latter they are bitten in.

The prepared ink is rubbed into the plate, and then the surface is wiped off, leaving the ink only in the sunken parts. The plate paper is then placed upon the plate, and it is passed through a heavy copper-

**Printing
in
black**

Printing plate hand-press. This forces the paper
in into the engraved part of the plate, trans-
Black ferring the ink to it. In a mezzotinto
(continued) plate, the shading is not a solid mass, as
can be seen by examining a print with a
magnifying glass. There will be found
cross lines with the paper showing be-
tween. This gives a transparency of
light and shade which could not be pro-
duced in any other way.

Printing The process of printing in colors is the
in same as printing in black, only different
Colors colored inks are rubbed into the plate in
from their proper places, blending where nec-
One cessary, the cleaning and printing being
Plate the same as described above. This, one
can see, requires an immense amount of
artistic knowledge, care and labor, the
plate requiring fresh coloring for each im-
pression. The first record of printing in
color is in 1720. The artist's name was
Jacob Le Blond. His print was taken
from a mezzotint plate. Since then there

was a gradual improvement until color printing arose to its highest perfection in the latter part of the 18th century. Owing to the great amount of care and labor required, the art was not practised to any extent in its most perfect form after the first part of the 19th century.

**Printing
in
Colors
from
One
Plate
(continued)**

The proofs of engravings when approaching completion cannot properly be called states, they are what are called "Engraver's Proofs." When the plate is finished to the satisfaction of both artists, the first impression struck off the plate is an Artist's Proof. Each Engraver's Proof is naturally unique. The usual custom was to publish a number of impressions with etched letters, or before letters. These impressions were called the first published state, then followed the second and third states. But in regard to these states, as a matter of fact, there is no well-defined rule to be applied. It is impossible within

States

States the limits of a few paragraphs to convey
(continued) any exact knowledge on so diffuse a subject.

Undesirable Prints A popular plate was often much abused. After leaving the hands of the original publisher (who had taken off what he considered as many impressions as the plate would bear), it would come into the possession of some printseller or publisher less scrupulous, would be retouched, and perhaps renamed, or the lettering all taken off, and false proofs issued. This was often done by placing a piece of thick paper over the letters during the printing, as well as by erasing the names from the copper. These deceptions have even been tried in present times, not only on the plates, but on the impressions themselves.

Why the Old Are the Best One may ask, why the old mezzotints are so much sought after and why they command such high prices? The answer is: Because they are the finest and best prod-

ucts of a most beautiful art; that they have improved with time; that they were made at a period when there was less of the commercial spirit prevalent and more of the artistic; that few perfect impressions were printed, and that, owing to the carelessness of many of the older collectors, few were preserved without blemish. It is the perfect print which is nowadays desired and competed for. Therefore, in selecting, care should be taken to choose those which are free from blemish and which are brilliant and clear in printing. It was not considered possible to print more than one hundred perfect impressions from one plate. Of some beautiful plates engraved for private individuals and circulation the impressions numbered less than fifty.

**Why the
Old Are
the Best
(continued)**

As there are a number of methods for *grounding* a plate, which in their results resemble mezzotint we give herewith descriptions of those well known and often seen:

Etching A copper plate is prepared and burnished, the same as a mezzotint plate; the surface of it is covered with a varnish which is not affected by acid. With a pointed instrument called an etching needle, this varnish is cut through, and wherever the copper is uncovered the acid bites. The longer the acid remains upon the plate the deeper the lines will be. Thus one can understand how the lights and darks are made which go to make a picture.

**Photo-
gravure** A photogravure, as the word suggests, is an engraving produced by the aid of photography. The processes of all photo-engraving primarily depends upon the fact that when soluble gelatine is mixed with bichromate of potash and exposed to the light it becomes insoluble.

To produce a photogravure then a thin film of bichromatized gelatine is exposed to

**Etching
Tools**



Photo-
gravure
(continued)

the light beneath a *reversed* negative. Under the lights or clearer portions of the reversed negative the film is acted upon by the light and rendered insoluble while those portions under the tones and shadows remain unaffected. The film is then transferred to a highly polished copper plate which has been "grounded" with a fine grain of powdered asphalt, dusted evenly over it and fixed by heat. The film is then "developed" by washing in warm water. The soluble gelatine representing the *darks* is washed away, the insoluble representing the *light* remains to act as a varying resistant to the etching mordant to whose action the plate is now exposed. The usual mordant is a solution of perchloride of iron and this penetrates the film with comparative ease in those parts representing the shades where there is little or no gelatine and thus bites into the copper and around each infinitesimal grain of asphalt to a considerable depth. In the parts representing the tonal shades, however, where the gelatine is thicker, the mordant penetrates with more and more difficulty leaving the ground in the highest lights practically untouched.





Sir Thomas Gainsborough Gainsborough Dupont
Eldest Princesses

When the biting has, in the judgment of the engraver, proceeded far enough, the gelatine and the asphalt ground are cleaned off and the plate is ready for the printer.

A solution of resin in spirits of wine is poured over the prepared copper plate (prepared the same as for a mezzotint) and drained off at one corner. This mixture when dry will leave a deposit of resin in minute specks (covering the plate evenly when properly done), which adhere to the plate when slightly heated. Acid is then applied; this eats into the spaces around each speck of resin. With a strong magnifying glass one can detect this process by the shape of the dots.

**Aquatint
Ground**

The copper plate is coated with oil and powdered sulphur is dusted over it; this acts quickly, but the ground is very delicate and needs to be bitten with acid, otherwise only a few impressions can be obtained.

**Sulphur-
tint**

The plate is covered with a liquid ground, made by mixing wax gum and resin, the same as in etching. When the plate is

Sandgrain

Sandgrain held face down over a gas jet this ground
(continued) becomes mixed with the black smoke from the flame, making a jet black surface which, when dry, will resist acid. A piece of sandpaper is then pressed face downwards into it, leaving little holes in the ground. The plate is then immersed in acid which bites wherever the holes are, into the plate.

In printing from the plates prepared as above described the result is not unlike a mezzotint, which is a series of dots. The dots, however, in pure mezzotint always have a burr, while the others do not.

All these processes require acid, while in a pure mezzotint no acid is used.

Soft Ground Etching Soft ground etching or *Gravure dans du crayon*, as the French term it, was very popular in the eighteenth Century. Upon the copper plate is laid an etching ground of a much softer and oilier nature than the ordinary. Over this is laid a sheet of thin paper carefully attached round the edges. On this the drawing is made in soft lead pencil used with a bold firm stroke and even pressure. When the paper is carefully

removed it carries with it the soft ground which adheres to the reverse side only where the pressure of the pencil has been applied. The plate is then bitten in the usual manner and the effect, when printed, closely resembles that of a crayon drawing.

**Soft
Ground
Etching
(continued)**

An etching ground is laid upon the copper plate, then with an etching needle the outline of the drawing is pricked through the wax, with a series of dots; afterwards the shadows are made. The plate is bitten as is an etching. The wax is then removed and the dots are re-entered with a specially shaped engraver, known as a stipple-graver.

**Stipple
Engraving**

- 1st. Printing from the Grounded Plate.
 - 2d. Printing from the Grounded and Etched Outline Plate.
 - 3d. Printing from the finished plate.
- These are taken to prove the work, and are called trial proofs.

**Progress
of the
Plate**

Etching Tools.

Hammer
Scorper
Oil Rubber
Dabber
Roller
Needle
Acid
Burnisher
Scraper
Plate Callipers
Roulettes

Dry Point Tools.

Needle
Burnisher
Scraper

Mezzotint Tools.

Scorper
Rocker or Cradle
Scraper
Burnisher
Roulettes

Stipple Tools

Stipple Engraver
Burnisher
Scraper

The following list comprises some of the prices which fine impressions have brought at auction during the last few years. These serve to show the great admiration and desire to procure the best exponents in this style and period of engravings which prevail in England at the present time.

Mrs. Carnac

After Reynolds, by J. R. Smith, before title with publication line and artists' names in scratched letters, \$6,090

Duchess of Rutland

After Reynolds, by V. Green, before title with publication line and artists' names in scratched letters, \$5,250

Lady Catherine Pelham Clinton

After Reynolds, by J. R. Smith, inscription in scratched letters, \$4,945

Lady Betty Delmé

After Reynolds, by V. Green, before title with publication line and artists' names in scratched letters, \$4,830

Lady Bampfylde

After Reynolds, by T. Watson, 1st published state, before name of personage, \$4,620

The Hon'ble. Miss Monckton

After Reynolds, by Jacobé, first state, \$4,500

Mrs. Davenport

After Romney, by J. Jones, 1st state,
with untrimmed margins, \$3,255

Lady Crosbie

After Reynolds, by W. Dickinson, before
the title, with publication line, and
artists' names in scratched letters, \$3,045

The Ladies' Waldegrave

After Reynolds, by V. Green, before
names of personages with publication
line and artists' names in scratched
letters, \$2,940

Mrs. Michael Angelo Taylor, as Miranda

After Hoppner, by W. Ward, before
inscription, \$2,877 50

Countess of Salisbury

After Reynolds, by V. Green, before
title, with publication line and artists'
names in scratched letters, \$2,625

The Hon'ble. Mrs. Beresford, Mrs. Gardiner and Vicountess Townshend

After Reynolds, by T. Watson, before
inscription, \$2,570

Lady Jane Halliday

After Reynolds, by V. Green, before title
with publication line and artists' names
in scratched letters, \$2,362 50

Vicountess Townshend

After Reynolds, by V. Green, before title,
with publication line, and artists' names
in scratched letters, \$2,362 50

Mrs. Carwardine

After Romney, by J. R. Smith, first
state, \$2,257 50

The Hon'ble. Mrs. Stanhope

After Reynolds, by J. R. Smith, first
state, \$2,152 50

Miss Cumberland

After Romney, by J. R. Smith, first state,
with inscription in scratched letters, \$2,047 50

Lady Hamilton, as Nature

After Romney, by Meyrer, first state, \$2,021 25

**The Douglas Children and The Hoppner
Children**

After Hoppner, by J. Ward, proof with
titles in open letters, a pair, \$1,890

Lady Heathcote, as Hebe

After Hoppner, by I. Ward, 1st state,
inscription in open letters, \$1,310

Lady Hamilton, as Bacchante

After Reynolds, by J. R. Smith, first
state, inscription in open letters, \$1,625

Duchess of Buccleuch and Daughter

After Reynolds, by T. Watson, first
state, \$1,575

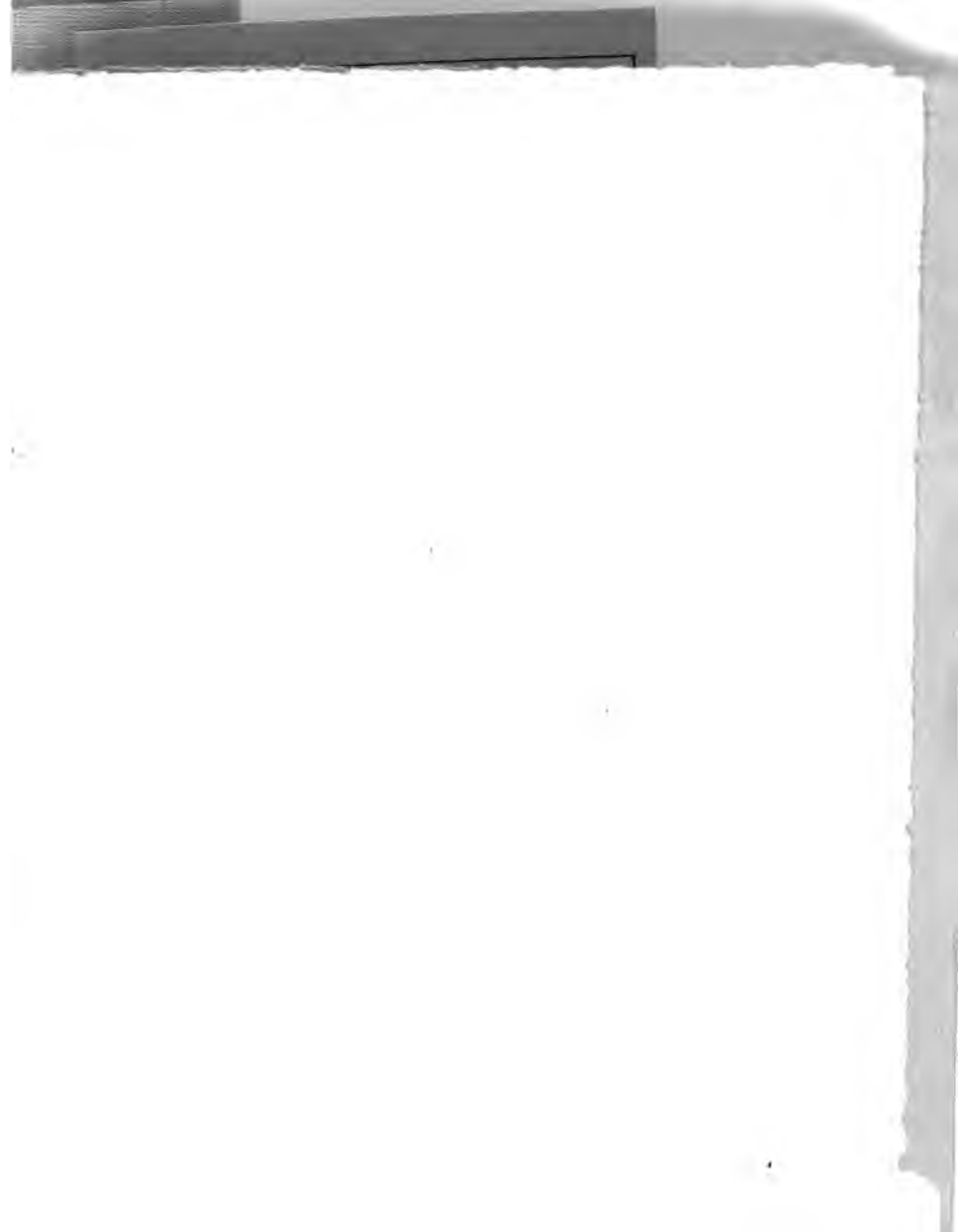
Mrs. Payne Galwey and Son

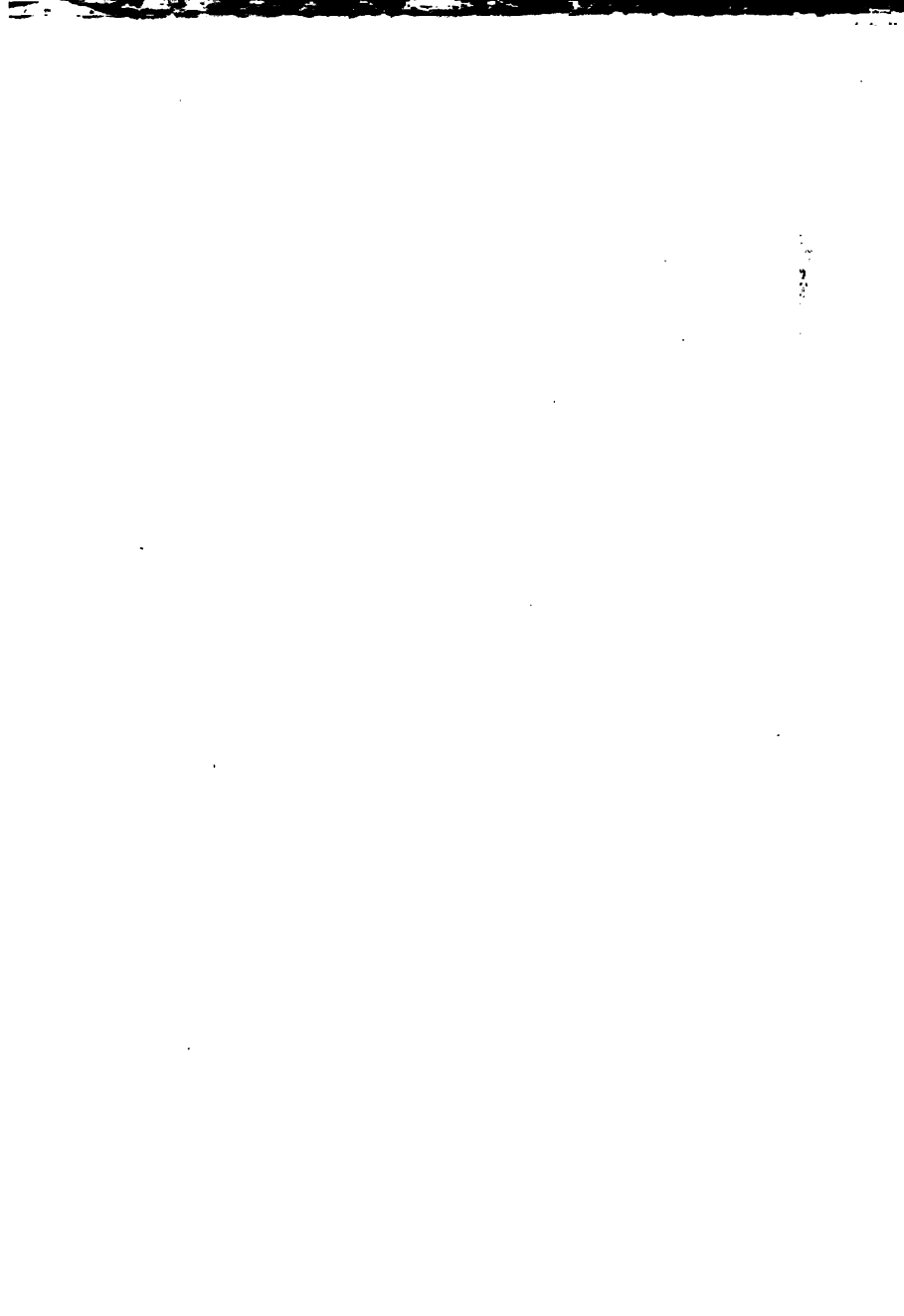
After Reynolds, by J. R. Smith, first
state, inscription in scratched letters, \$1,522 50

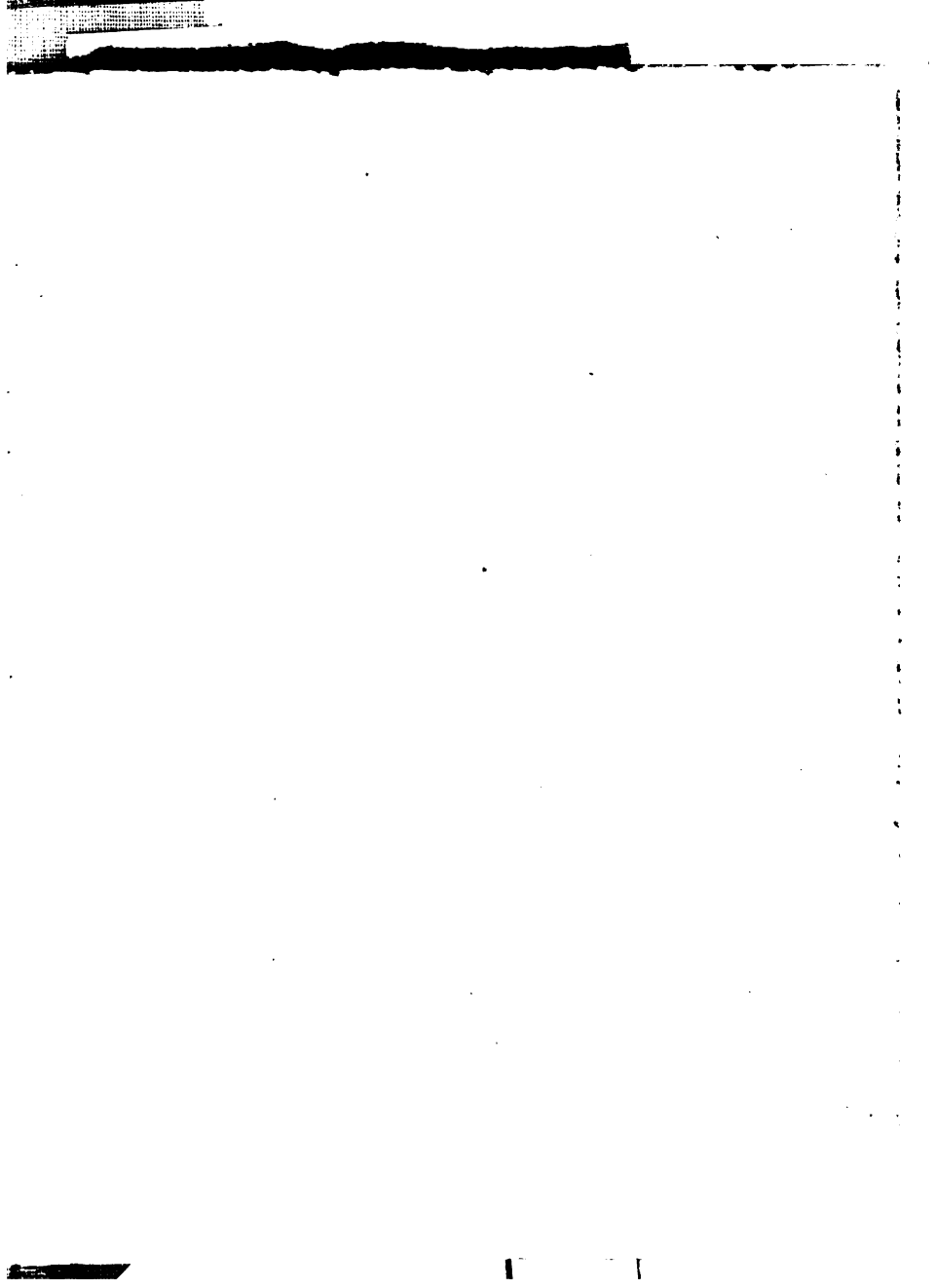
The Hon'ble. Mrs. North

After Romney, by J. R. Smith, before
inscription, \$1,312 50

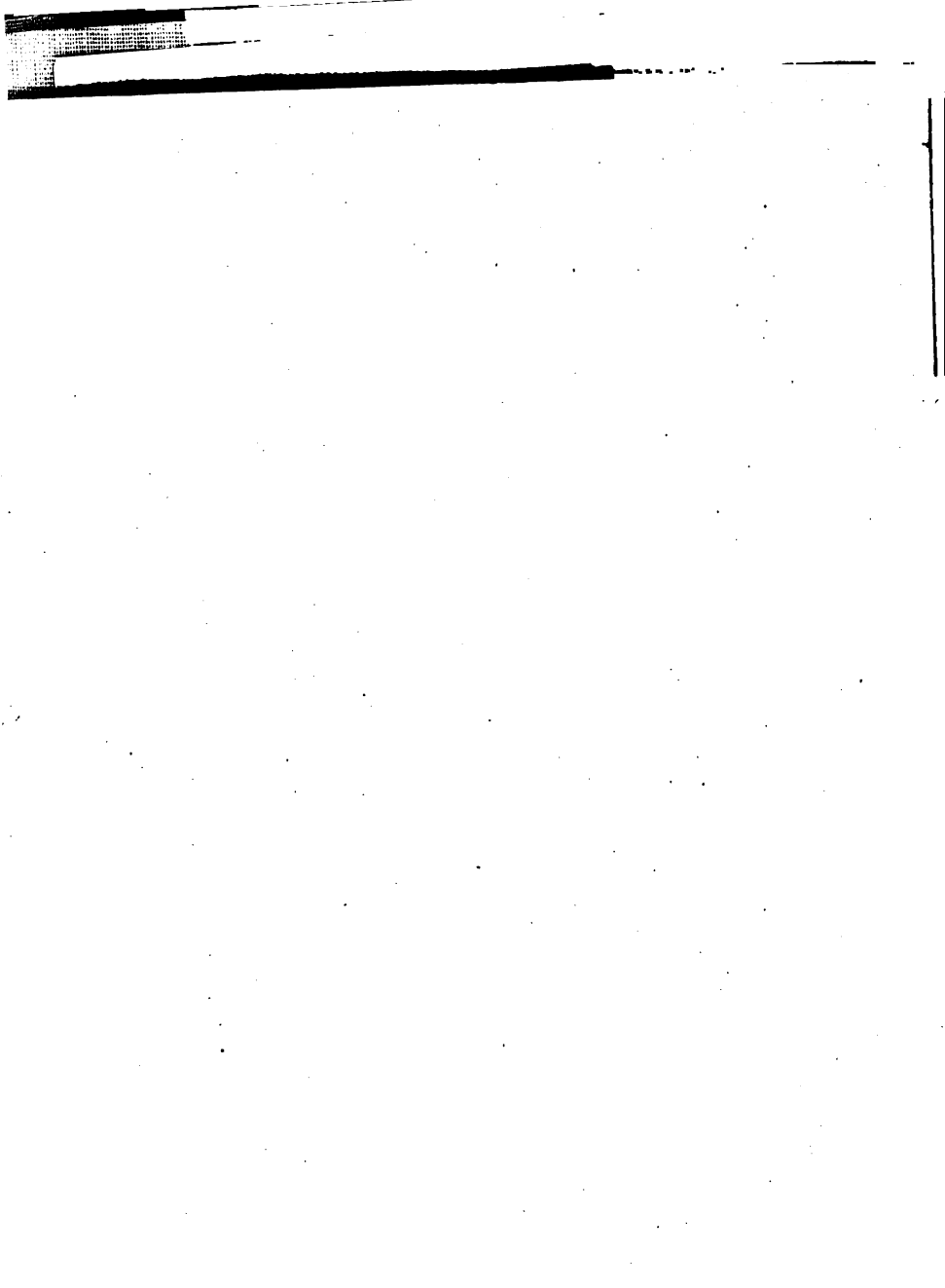








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